

JACQUES  
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*The Beast & the Sovereign*

VOLUME II



perhaps to pray in addressing oneself beyond the sovereignty of God or independently of his supposed sovereignty, of his ontic sovereignty in any case, as fundamental cause, *causa sui* or supreme principle, or as the highest being (*das höchste Seiende*), which is what sovereign (*superamus*) literally means.

Indeed, as soon as metaphysics thinks beings as such in their totality, as a totality (*das Seiende als solches im Ganzen*) and God then becomes the highest being, the most elevated, the supreme foundational being (*das höchste, alles begründende Seiende*) who grounds every thing in reason, then metaphysics becomes a logic as theo-logic or theo-logy. Now the God of this metaphysical onto-theology, this God of the philosophers as *causa sui* or as *Ursache*, as primordial cause, original thing and cause, the God thus named in philosophy, is, says Heidegger (thus rediscovering in his way, with a difference I'll return to in a moment, the vein of a Pascalian discourse against the God of the philosophers, to which Pascal opposes the God of Abraham and Jacob), [the God of this metaphysical onto-theology], is a God to whom man does not pray, and to which he sacrifices nothing. Heidegger writes, I quote and translate:

This is the proper name [*Ursache* or *Causa sui*] for God in philosophy (*So lautet der sachgerechte Name für den Gott in der Philosophie*). [He has just spoken of God as *Ursache*, and now he says that this is the most just and the most well adjusted name for the thing thus aimed at in philosophy, and he adds:] Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this God [*Zu diesem Gott kann der Mensch weder beten, noch kann er ihm opfern. Vor der Causa sui kann der Mensch weder aus Scheu ins Knie fallen, noch kann er vor diesem Gott musizieren und tanzen*: Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this God]. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this God.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, Heidegger is not busy enjoining us to pray, to sacrifice or to sing to God. He simply says that the God of the philosophers, the *causa sui*, the supreme Entity, the supreme being (as the revolutionaries of 1789 said), a supreme being who is no more than a supreme Entity, and therefore the sovereign, in the ontic sense of the term—Heidegger simply says that this supreme being is not a God to whom one prays, whom one praises in hymns, or to whom one addresses one's music and one's chants. Heidegger does not refer here, and especially not in the mode of prayer or preaching, to the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He simply tells us that if one is to pray to God, and sacrifice for him, in that case it must not be addressed to the God of onto-theology and the philosophers, who moreover has no address and is not listening; if one wishes to address prayers, sacrifices, chance, and dances to God, these must not be discourses and acts destined for the ontic sovereign, the supreme cause, or the most elevated being. The God of the philosophers (Aristotle's *noesis noesos* or pure act, Spinoza's *causa sui*, etc.) is not, in essence, a being who receives prayers and sacrifices and chants and praises and hymns, etc. Does that justify a return to faith or religion? Does that call on us to go beyond all sovereignty, or only onto-theological sovereignty—those are the questions that await us, along with the agency of *Walten*, which I shall attempt to show in a moment is both foreign or heterogeneous, excessive even, with respect to this ontic and therefore theological or theologico-political sovereignty, and that nonetheless, and by that very fact, perhaps constitutes an ontological super-sovereignty, at the source of the ontological difference.

However, I think it is necessary, before going any further, to situate what distinguishes what Heidegger is saying about prayer here from the experience we find in both *Robinson Crusoe* and

in Pascal. Heidegger says what he says about prayer in a text the discursivity of which remains theoretical or constative, which in any case is not of the order of performative address, and certainly not of prayer in the strict sense. Heidegger is speaking *of* prayer and *of* God, but he is neither praying to nor addressing a God who would not be the God of the philosophers and onto-theology. Robinson Crusoe, for his part, is writing a book which, in itself, and as an autobiography, is a sort of prayer, a sort of prayer in view of prayer. Robinson Crusoe tells us how he tried to pray, to be reborn to prayer, to allow prayer to be reborn in him, and how he came to pray again. The book itself, the narrative or the journal, does not pray (unless it is implicitly praying the reader to read it with God as his or her witness), but Robinson<sup>13</sup> nevertheless quotes, and several times, which Heidegger never does, insistently quotes prayers, and prayers that are essentially linked to the Christian revelation, as the only prayers worthy of the name. And these are prayers that he learns, that he learns to relearn, and that he quotes as though he were reiterating them in his very writing.

As for Pascal himself, we must clearly recall the mode in which the famous remark about "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob" appears. As you well know, it is in a *posthumous* piece of writing (now of course, all writings are posthumous, each in its own way, even those that are known and published during the author's lifetime, but within this generality of the posthumous, within the trace as structurally and essentially and by destinal vocation posthumous or testamentary, there is a stricter enclave of the posthumous, namely what is only discovered and published after the death of the author or the signatory). Pascal's writing on the God of Abraham was strictly posthumous in this latter sense, even though we're not sure that Pascal wanted it to be published. It was posthumous in this

very strict sense since it was found written on a piece of paper found in Pascal's clothing after his death. This piece of paper initially takes the form of a journal, of a note to self, dated in Pascal's hand—Pascal, who like Robinson Crusoe, here dates his signature. He inscribes the year, the month, the day, and the hour: "The year of grace 1654. Monday, 23 November," and Pascal thus takes the event in the Christian calendar (not merely Christian as are all calendars hereabouts, but here overloaded with Christianity, with sacred memory and history, since Pascal adds, after "the year of grace 1654. Monday, 23 November," "day of St. Clement, Pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology, / Vigil of St. Chrysogonis, martyr, and others, / from around half past ten in the evening to around half past midnight."<sup>14</sup>

(As I'm mentioning dates, it is perhaps not insignificant to point out that on that date Robinson Crusoe, if we are to believe the first words of his autobiography, was only twenty-three years old ("I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of *York*" [RC, 3]). He was only nine years younger than Pascal, born in 1623. According to the fiction, it is five years after Pascal's writing that we are reading that Robinson Crusoe lands on his island, and you remember that in order to remind himself of that fact, he says he wrote on a cross-shaped post (which is not insignificant), the date of his arrival on the island. In this way he established a calendar beginning on that date:

I cut it with my Knife upon a large Post, in Capital Letters, and making it into a great Cross I set it up on the Shore where I first landed, viz. *I came on Shore here on the 30th of Sept. 1659.* (RC, 59)

And Pascal was only thirty-one years old when he wrote and put into his clothing the posthumous paper we are deciphering

perhaps to pray in addressing oneself beyond the sovereignty of God or independently of his supposed sovereignty, of his ontic sovereignty in any case, as fundamental cause, *causa sui* or supreme principle, or as the highest being (*das höchste Seiende*), which is what sovereign (*superamus*) literally means.

Indeed, as soon as metaphysics thinks beings as such in their totality, as a totality (*das Seiende als solches im Ganzen*) and God then becomes the highest being, the most elevated, the supreme foundational being (*das höchste, alles begründende Seiende*) who grounds every thing in reason, then metaphysics becomes a logic as theo-logic or theo-logy. Now the God of this metaphysical onto-theology, this God of the philosophers as *causa sui* or as *Ursache*, as primordial cause, original thing and cause, the God thus named in philosophy, is, says Heidegger (thus rediscovering in his way, with a difference I'll return to in a moment, the vein of a Pascalian discourse against the God of the philosophers, to which Pascal opposes the God of Abraham and Jacob), [the God of this metaphysical onto-theology], is a God to whom man does not pray, and to which he sacrifices nothing. Heidegger writes, I quote and translate:

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and that he must have kept for around eight years, as he died in 1662, at "39 years and two months,"<sup>15</sup> says his sister. One can wager that a Pascal in our own century would have had a longer life expectancy. But if it is certain that the "remember me" animates the motivation of Robinson's calendar and marks, one might wonder if this is the case with Pascal. To whom did he write this? For whom did he write in general? For there is in Pascal, as moreover—quite differently—in Blanchot, a "do not remember me," a "keep me in oblivion" (we have a thousand examples of this in Blanchot's texts, that I have quoted at length elsewhere, in *Parages* or in *Politics of Friendship*<sup>16</sup>), a "forget me" about which one can always wonder if it is not also praying that one remember to forget and even attach oneself to the one thus praying that one not attach oneself to him. This paradox of the "forget me," "do not love me," is to be found in Pascal, and there again consigned to another "little paper" as his elder sister Gilberte Pascal Périer says in her *Life of Blaise Pascal*. This is how she presents and quotes this "little paper": (Quote and comment on Pascal)

Thus he made it appear, that he had no attachment to those he loved, for had he been capable of having one, it would indisputably have been to my sister; since she was undeniably the person in the world he loved most. But he carried it still farther, for not only he had no attachment to any body, but he was absolutely against any body's having one to him, I do not mean any criminal or dangerous attachments, for that would be too gross an error to be supposed, as the whole world is convinced of the contrary; but I speak in relation to those friendships, which are of the most innocent nature, and this was one of the things, over which he kept a most regular watch, that he might never give any occasion for it himself, and that he might prevent it in others: as I did not know this, I was quite surprised at the checks he would

sometimes give me, and I told my sister of it; complaining to her, that my brother had no affection for me, and that it looked as if I made him uneasy, even at the very time I was the most affectionately employing myself to do him services in his sickness. But my sister told me I was deceived, for she knew to the contrary, that he had as great affection for me, as I myself could wish. By this means, my sister removed my apprehensions, and it was not long before I saw some proofs of what she said: for on the first occasion that presented it self to make me want some assistance from my brother, he embraced that opportunity, with so much assiduity and such tokens of affection, that I had no longer reason to doubt his having a great love for me; so that I imputed the cold reception he gave to my earnest attention how to divert him, to the chagrining circumstances of his distemper. This riddle was never interpreted to me, till just the very day of his death, when one of the most remarkable persons for his great genius and piety, with whom my brother had long conferred about the practice of virtue, told me, he had given him this instruction amongst others, that he ought never to suffer any body whatsoever to love him with any particular attachment: that it was a fault, we do not enough examine ourselves about, because we do not perceive the enormity of it, nor consider, that by cherishing and enduring these attachments, the heart was too much taken up with them, which ought to be entirely devoted to God alone: that it was thieving from him, that thing he set the greatest value upon in this world.

We afterwards perceived, that this principle had entered very deep into his heart, for to the end he might always have it presented to his thoughts, he had set it down in his own handwriting, on a little piece of paper by it self, where were these words.

"It is unjust to make any attachment, though one makes it spontaneously and with pleasure. I should deceive those in whom I should give rise to such a desire, for I am no ultimate end of any body, nor have I what can satisfy that desire. Am I not bordering upon death? If so, the object of their attachment will die too. As I



should be blameable to make people believe a falshood, though I contrived it ever so delicately, to persuade them they might with pleasure believe it, and in doing so they gave me a pleasure: just so am I blameable if I make my self to be beloved; and if I draw people into an attachment to me, I ought to warn those who would be ready to assent to this lie, that they ought to give no credit to it, whatever advantage might accrue to me, from their believing it; and it is my duty to warn them too, that they ought not to be attached to me at all: for it is their duty, to employ their lives, and their whole care, to please and after God."<sup>17</sup>

Let's come back now to <this> "Writing Found In Pascal's Clothing after His Death." There can be little doubt that this little piece of paper was destined, if not for someone, then at least to remain, to survive the moment of its inscription, to remain legible in the exteriority of a trace, of a document, even if it were readable only for Pascal himself, later, in the generation of repetitions to come. This is indeed what has been called a *memorial*, to use the word of a witness, Father Guerrier:

"A few days after the death of Monsieur Pascal," said Father Guerrier, "a servant of the house noticed by chance an area in the lining of the doublet of the illustrious deceased that appeared thicker than the rest, and having removed the stitching at this place to see what it was, he found there a little folded parchment written in the hand of Monsieur Pascal, and in the parchment a paper written in the same hand: the one was a faithful copy of the other. These two pieces were immediately put into the hands of Madame Périer who showed them to several of her particular friends. All agreed there was no doubt that this parchment, written with so much care and with such remarkable characters, was a type of *memorial* that he kept very carefully to preserve the memory of a thing that he wanted to have always present to his eyes and to his mind, since for eight years he had taken care to stitch it and unstitch it from his clothes, as his wardrobe changed." The

parchment is lost; but at the beginning of the manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, one can find the paper that reproduced it, written in the hand of Pascal, the authenticity of which was confirmed by a note signed by the Abbé Périer, Pascal's nephew. At the top, there is a cross, surrounded by rays of light.<sup>18</sup>

After the date so Christianly specified in the history and calendar of Christianity, a single word, in the middle of the line:

### Fire [*feu*]

This word "fire" is, then, isolated, alone, insularized on a single line, and I'm not sure I can interpret it; I'm even sure that I cannot interpret it in a decidable way, between the fire of glory and the fire that reduces to ashes or that still smolders under the ashes of some cremation (*Aschenglorie*). But this word "fire" comes before the line that says: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,"<sup>19</sup> which is itself a quotation from Exodus and from Matthew.<sup>20</sup>

Now there is no doubt that the general form of this posthumous fragment is both, indissociably, that of a prayer and of a journal for self or for other humans, other brothers in sin, neighbors, a confession basically analogous to Augustine's *Confessions*, confessions designed to avow a sin and to bring the others, neighbors, brothers and sons of God, to a greater love of God (Augustine, as you know, was considered by Jansenius and the Jansenists to be (I'm quoting Jansenius) "the first among doctors, the first among fathers, the first among ecclesiastical writers after the canonic doctors, father of fathers, doctor of doctors, subtle [...] angelic, seraphic, most excellent and ineffably admirable"<sup>21</sup> [there is no doubt, then, that the general form of this posthumous fragment by Pascal is both, indissociably, that of the prayer and of a journal for self or for

295

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296

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 40. [Translator’s note: my translation.]

16. See Jacques Derrida, *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), pp. 72–73, 99–101, and 107–8; *Politiques de l’amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), p. 328; trans. George Collins as *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 296.

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17. Gilberte Pascal, "Vie de Blaise Pascal," in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées et opuscules*, pp. 31–32. [*The Life of Mr. Paschal, with his Letters Relating to the Jesuits, translated into English by W. A.* (London, 1744), pp. xliii–xlvi].

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–42. [Translator's note: my translation.]

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Now there is no doubt that the general form of this posthumous fragment is both, indissociably, that of a prayer and of a journal for self or for other humans, other brothers in sin, neighbors, a confession basically analogous to Augustine’s *Confessions*, confessions designed to avow a sin and to bring the others, neighbors, brothers and sons of God, to a greater love of God (Augustine, as you know, was considered by Jansenius and the Jansenists to be (I’m quoting Jansenius) “the first among doctors, the first among fathers, the first among ecclesiastical writers after the canonic doctors, father of fathers, doctor of doctors, subtle [. . .] angelic, seraphic, most excellent and ineffably admirable”<sup>21</sup> [there is no doubt, then, that the general form of this posthumous fragment by Pascal is both, indissociably, that of the prayer and of a journal for self or for other humans, other neighbors and brothers in sin], and also, primarily, a prayer addressed to God and to Jesus his son, even though often this prayer quotes words from the Bible and thus resembles a mixture of use and mention.<sup>22</sup>

†

The year of grace 1654.

Monday, 23 November, day of St. Clement, Pope and martyr, and others  
in the martyrology,

Vigil of St. Chrysogonis, martyr, and others,

From around half past ten in the evening to around half past twelve.

FIRE [*feu*]

“God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob”

not of philosophers and savants.

Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joy. Peace.

God of Jesus Christ.

*Deum meum et Deum vestrum.*

“Thy God will be my God.”

Oblivion of the world and of all, save for God.

He is found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Grandeur of the human soul.

“Just Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee.”

19. *Ibid.*, p. 142

20. Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:32.

21. Quoted in Pascal, *Pensées et opuscules*, p. 50. [Translator’s note: the parenthesis opened four lines earlier should presumably close here.]

22. The words “use” and “mention” are in English in the text.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I am separated from him:

*Dereliquerunt me fontem aquae viva.*

“My God, will you forsake me?”

Oh, may I not be separated from him eternally.

“This is the life eternal, that they know Thee the only true God, and Him  
whom Thou

hast sent, Jesus Christ.”

Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ.

I am separated from Him; I have fled, renounced, crucified Him.

Oh that I may never be separated from Him.

He is only held fast by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Renunciation total and sweet.

Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my guiding force.

Eternally in joy for a day of exercise on earth.

*Non obliviscar sermones tuos. Amen.*<sup>23</sup>

300

Heidegger, for his part, is not praying when he speaks, in the third person, of the God of onto-theology and when he notes that one does not pray and does not sacrifice to Him. Heidegger is not praying when he speaks, always in the third person, and not, like when one prays, in the second, he is not praying when he speaks in the third person of the God to whom one would get down on one's knees and pray or for whom one would sacrifice and dance and sing.

Nevertheless, he adds in the following section a very serious remark, namely that thought without God (*das gott-lose Denken*), and thus atheistic or a-theological thinking under the regime of onto-theology, and thus the thinking of those who, as philosophers, declare themselves to be atheists (and this is indeed the case of Heidegger, among others)—well, that they, that their thinking without God is perhaps closer to the divine God, to the divinity of God, more open to it than the thinking of a theism, or of a philosophical belief in the God of the philosophers and of onto-theology. This casts light on what Heidegger often says about his own atheism and about a philosophy which, as such, is incompatible with belief (*Glaube*) in God. Heidegger writes, I quote:

The god-less thinking (*das gott-lose Denken*) which must abandon the God of philosophy, God as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps [I emphasize the *perhaps*,

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–43; translation adapted with some modifications from John Tull-och, *Pascal* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1878), pp. 90–91.